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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	13386/25
Subject:	Council Conclusions on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities through the promotion of independent living

Delegations will find attached the Council Conclusions on the above subject approved by the EPSCO Council at its meeting held on 17 October 2025.

**Social inclusion of persons with disabilities
through the promotion of independent living**

Council Conclusions

NOTING THAT:

1. The European Union is founded on the values of human dignity, freedom, equality and respect of human rights and is committed to combating discrimination including on the grounds of disability, as set out in the Treaty on European Union, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
2. In 2021, the Council of the European Union welcomed and endorsed the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 ('EU Disability Strategy')¹. The Strategy supports the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which has been concluded by the Union and ratified by all Member States, as well as the European Pillar of Social Rights, particularly its principle 17, which emphasises the importance of social inclusion and equal opportunities for people with disabilities.
3. The EU Disability Strategy states that Member States and all EU institutions and agencies should take the needs of persons with disabilities into consideration when designing, implementing and monitoring policies, legislation and funding programmes, through targeted action and mainstreaming. It also promotes an intersectional perspective.

¹ 9749/1/21 REV1

4. The right to independent living is enshrined in Article 19 of the UNCRPD, which commits States Parties to take effective measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of the right to independent living and their full inclusion and participation in the community. The Commission Notice Guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community of persons with disabilities in the context of EU funding (‘Commission Guidance on Independent Living’) provides practical recommendations to Member States on the use of EU funding to support investments and structural reforms to promote independent living for persons with disabilities and support national and regional efforts to implement the UNCRPD.
5. It is estimated that more than one million persons with disabilities aged under 65, and more than two million persons with disabilities over 65, lived in institutions in the EU according to 2020 research²³. Despite progress achieved, Member States are at different stages in developing conditions for independent living. As a result, many persons with disabilities still face barriers to fully exercising their right to choose and have control over decisions concerning their lives, including where, how and with whom they live. There is therefore a need for further efforts at both the EU and national level, to ensure the full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of their right to live in the community on an equal basis with others.

² European Commission: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and Grammenos, S., *COVID-19 and persons with disabilities – Statistics on health, care, isolation and networking*.

³ Research suggests that the number of children, adults and older people with disabilities in residential institutions has continued to rise in recent years, *Eurofound (2024), Paths towards independent living and social inclusion in Europe, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg*.

6. The adequate, integrated and continuous provision of person-centred community support services such as personal assistance, supported decision making and support networks, is essential for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the community and in order to prevent isolation or segregation from the community. Measures are also needed to tackle persistent barriers that hinder persons with disabilities' access on an equal basis with others to community services and facilities for the general population, including to accessible and non-segregated places of residence, which can take many forms, from individual dwellings to cohabitation arrangements and different types of tenancies.
7. It is crucial to support quality employment and fair working conditions in the care sector, in order to improve the professionalisation of care, to provide quality long-term care services and to address skills needs and labour shortages. At the same time, also recognising the significant role played by women as informal carers, Member States should better identify non-professional carers and support them in their care-giving activities through measures such as a right to respite for carers and support services.
8. Efforts to ensure the independent living and inclusion of persons with disabilities are hampered by barriers to accessing social and health care services, early childhood education and care, education and training, employment, culture, sport and leisure activities on an equal basis with others, including due to the lack of accessibility and reasonable accommodation in these areas. For this reason, it is important to ensure that community services and facilities that are available to the general population are also available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs. As underlined in the UNCRPD, the application of universal design principles in the creation of new services and environments fosters equal access for all and reduces reliance on later adaptations.

9. Affordable assistive technology and innovative accessible technological solutions play a crucial role in enabling independent living, for example through the development and availability of devices and software that facilitate communication, mobility, and access to information, by providing at-home and remote care for persons with disabilities, including in rural and remote areas. In addition, accessibility of information and communication technologies and services, including through the development of digital skills, is a prerequisite for ensuring that persons with disabilities can exercise their rights, including the right to freedom of expression, and can navigate their communities without facing barriers to their participation in society. To that end, the European Accessibility Act, supported by AccessibleEU activities, contribute to improving accessibility in the EU.
10. Crisis situations affect persons with disabilities disproportionately, often exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities. Persons with disabilities still face barriers which prevent them from fully benefitting from and accessing emergency response on an equal basis with others, and the design and delivery of assistance continues to be insufficiently adapted to their needs. Addressing this concern, including through emergency plans, is also important in the context of enabling independent living.
11. Measures to promote independent living should take into account the multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination and disadvantage that may affect persons with disabilities. Particularly women, children and older people with disabilities often experience different obstacles, realities and needs, and are at increased risk of exclusion. Women and girls with disabilities are also often at greater risk of violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation. Promoting their full and equal participation in all spheres and their right to live in the community on an equal basis with others therefore requires particular attention and adapted measures as a response to their specific needs.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION CALLS ON THE MEMBER STATES, in accordance with their competences and taking into account national circumstances, TO:

12. Develop or further improve measures for the promotion of independent living of persons with disabilities in line, as appropriate, with the Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 and in order to fulfil the obligations in the UNCRPD and in particular those set out in Article 19.
13. When preparing policies, strategies and actions, draw on existing knowledge and best practices, taking into consideration the approach reflected in the Commission's Guidance on Independent Living, in particular regarding the effective use of EU funding to promote independent living for persons with disabilities and, where relevant, make use of the support provided by the resource centre AccessibleEU.
14. Support interventions to enable persons with disabilities to live independently in the community, including by ensuring the availability of accessible, affordable and non-segregated places of residence and the support necessary to allow for independent living, while respecting individual choices and taking into account individual circumstances and needs.
15. Enhance consultation with and promote the active involvement of persons with disabilities at all levels in the development, implementation and monitoring of actions and policies that concern them, including through their representative organisations.

16. Promote access to and affordability of person-centred support services, such as personal assistance, assistive technology, accessible information and communication technologies and services, supported decision making and organised support systems (e.g. peer support, centres for independent living and supported living arrangements).
17. Ensure that services available to the general population are also available, accessible, affordable, inclusive and adaptable for persons with disabilities and that they are delivered in a coordinated manner.
18. Provide training for service providers to facilitate person-centred support and service provision in the community, with the aim of supporting independent living in accordance with the UNCRPD.
19. Inform persons with disabilities, including current residents of institutions and their families, of their rights, entitlements and options as regards places of residence and offer the necessary support and guidance in the decision-making process, including through individual plans and case management.
20. Increase, where necessary, the availability of affordable, accessible, inclusive, non-segregated and safe places of residence in communities so as to prevent homelessness and housing deprivation and facilitate independent living.

CALLS ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

21. Taking into account, as applicable, the Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of the European Union by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, have a continued focus on promoting and ensuring independent living when presenting initiatives and actions as part of the second half of the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 and fill any remaining policy gaps, while fully respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and the diversity of systems in Member States.

22. When preparing initiatives and actions, consult and actively involve relevant stakeholders, especially persons with disabilities through their representative organisations and the European Disability Platform.
23. Assess the functioning of the internal market for assistive technologies and the need for further action on product eligibility and certification in order to improve access to and facilitate the free movement of assistive technologies.
24. Promote and facilitate capacity building, mutual learning and the exchange of good practices between Member States, in cooperation with the representative organisations of persons with disabilities, so as to strengthen the understanding of the human rights approach to disability inclusion, the knowledge base regarding areas such as accessibility and independent living, including personal assistance for persons with disabilities, and ways of improving working conditions in the care sector and supporting informal carers and personal assistants.
25. Improve the availability of sex-disaggregated data on and conduct an analysis, involving the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and Eurofound, of the situation of persons with disabilities living in different living arrangements across the Union, including in terms of quality of life and inclusion in the community and their relative costs and benefits, with the aim of deepening the understanding of the obstacles and success factors in ensuring independent living, taking into account individual choices, circumstances and needs.

26. Work towards systematic disability mainstreaming in line with the UNCRPD in all EU policies and by integrating disability-inclusive and accessibility measures, where relevant, into key EU strategies such as the European Preparedness Union Strategy, the future Action Plan on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the future European Affordable Housing Plan, the future EU Anti-poverty Strategy, and when designing a future stand-alone high-level EU gender equality strategy for the period post-2025, so as to ensure that they benefit persons with disabilities and take into account the need to remove barriers and to combat discrimination faced by persons with disabilities.
 27. Develop comprehensive guidelines on how to act in emergencies adapted to all types of impairments (including physical, mental, intellectual or sensory), and on how to ensure accessibility and inclusion, as well as on training for first responders to recognise different types of impairments and how to act accordingly.
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7. United Nations

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